United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
6013 Lakeside Blvd.
Indianapolis, IN 46278

June 3, 2008

SUBJECT: ADS – Communication Procedures from State to Field Level Offices

TO: All NRCS Employees File Code: 120-14-5

This memo establishes the procedures for the development and distribution of communication from state to field level offices. Written communication may be in the form of correspondence or a directive.

Correspondence may be in the format of a formal letter which uses an inside address, salutation and complementary closing or a memorandum with captions "SUBJECT", "TO", and "File Code" and does not use a complementary closing. The policy for correspondence is set forth in the General Manual 120-402.A-SubpartA - Correspondence.

Directives are written communications that initiate or govern actions, conduct or procedures. Most are permanent and remain in effect until cancelled. They include General Manual, Topical Manuals, Topical Handbooks, Instructions, Circulars and Automated Systems. Bulletins are used to issue temporary directives. They expire at the end of the fiscal year. They cannot change, delete, add to, cancel or transmit permanent directives. The policy for directives is set forth in the General Manual 120-403.A-SubpartA-Directives.

The approval process for correspondence and general communications is outlined below. These procedures will become effective June 1, 2008, and will remain in effect until cancelled.

A. Actions – General

All communications with or with out due dates or deadlines sent to the field require the State Conservationist's approval and signature.

1. The Leadership Team member who heads the section responsible for the communication item will approve by initialing any correspondence developed by their staff for the State Conservationist's signature.
2. Action dates are discussed and coordinated, when possible, at Leadership Team Monday morning teleconferences or Leadership Team meetings.
3. When #2 is not possible the Leadership Team member responsible for taking the lead in developing the correspondence is also responsible for getting input and concurrence from other Leadership Team members.
    a. They will email the draft communication (correspondence, directive, etc.) to the Leadership Team with a response date.
    b. The Leadership Team members will respond with comments if desired.
    c. The originator moves forward in finalizing the communication after the response date.

B. Actions – Requests from the National Office to the field with Action Required, Due Dates, or Deadlines for response

1. Requests received in written or email form

   The Leadership Team member who heads the section responsible will prepare correspondence for the State Conservationist's signature. This correspondence will set a deadline for action to assure that the information is provided to the state office in time to meet the national deadline. The National correspondence may be forwarded to the field with the state attachment (cover) or the state correspondence may just restate the national correspondence action. Actions/due dates will follow procedures previously stated in A. General.

2. Requests received in verbal form with urgent turn around times

   The Leadership Team member will communicate with the State Conservationist and/or other appropriate Leadership Team members and obtain concurrence on forwarding the request to the field. The appropriate Area Conservationist or Acting Area Conservationist will be contacted prior to the request being made to the field.

C. Other Communications

1. Follow-up on Action Items

   Staff responsible for receiving and compiling the requested information will inform the responsible Leadership Team member (section head) of any employees/offices who have not responded by the deadline. The Leadership Team member will determine the appropriate follow-up method. These methods may include, but are not limited to:

   a. Contact the responsible Area Conservationist for assistance in obtaining the information.
   b. Call the responsible office or employee directly

2. Instruction

   Instructions on how to perform a task or clarification for completing an approved task that was issued under the State Conservationist's signature may be sent out under the appropriate Leadership Team member's signature.

3. Reminders

   Staff may develop written reminders of due dates to be sent out before deadlines. Reminders will go out with the Leadership Team members' concurrence.

4. Technical Information

   Issuance of technical information required to be maintained at the field or area office level requires the State Conservationist's signature.

5. General Information

   General distribution of information can be sent out under staff signature following approval by the Leadership Team member for that section.

6. General Information – As Requested

   State and area staff members may respond to requests from the field for information pertaining to their area of expertise as appropriate. Field staff should direct their questions to the appropriate staff member listed in the "Who 'Ya Gonna Call" list.

   Sometimes information is provided where there is more than one staff responsible for the information. Each staff should be sure that a coordinated response is made, or that the request is forwarded to the appropriate person so that conflicting information is not provided.

7. Information – Special

   Information on special events, recognitions, field days, etc.should be submitted to Hoosier Headlines, IASWCD Weekly Update or some other information media.

8. Information – Outside Requests

   At times employees will receive a request to respond to a survey or a data call from outside the agency. If such a request is received, notify the SAO who will prepare guidance on whether the agency has approved participation.

9. Information – Special Emphasis Programs

   SEPMs should limit their information communications to one per week during the special recognition months and one per month during other times of the year. If more frequent communication is needed, it will need to be approved by the ASTC Outreach and Communications prior to being sent.

D. E-mail Procedures

1. In sending e-mails, the subject of all e-mails are to state the subject clearly in order for the receiver to determine if the e-mail is applicable to what they do.

2. In an effort to reduce the number of e-mails being sent to the field, e-mails will be bundled and sent from the state office on Tuesdays and Fridays. This will include:
   a. Directives – Permanent and Temporary (Bulletins)
   b. Internal correspondence
   c. HR announcements, enrollments, Public Affairs, etc.
   d. External Training opportunities

3. IT e-mails such as an office with phones or e-mail down will come from one source only.

4. RC&D offices are to maintain updated distribution lists. RC&D offices are to keep their e-mails to their RC&D area of coverage as much as possible. RC&D offices will group e-mails and send in bundles as much as possible.

5. Death, birth, personnel notices and retirement announcements will be sent immediately from the first notified office. Efforts will be made to avoid duplicative announcements.

This information is to establish procedures for correspondence and general communication in written or electronic form and not to limit needed communications in our daily efforts to perform our duties and responsibilities. If you have questions about how you should perform these duties, contact the Leadership Team member responsible for your activities.

/s/

JANE E. HARDISTY
State Conservationist